



## Levels of Thought

A common frustration of entering AP students is the seemingly lower grades and not knowing the proverbial “what the teacher wants” issues. Students are good at deciphering what high school teachers want, but now they must learn what the college professor is going to want. Here is a list of levels to be achieved, from highest to lowest. They don’t correspond exactly to letter grades, but they do represent behaviors and expectations for Advanced Placement English.

- VI. EVALUATION:** The writer forms a judgement based on facts, examples and specific criteria. When a writer wins a Pulitzer Prize for thoughtful criticism of literature, then he/she is fully at this level. All other levels (see below) have been achieved and the writer has arrived at this highest level of critical thinking. No one (instructor included) operates totally on this plane.
- V. SYNTHESIS:** This is where AP students need to be working. Writers on this level can construct a great thesis statement. It demands thinking about the literature in a **NEW** way, far more than pointing to the text. It requires combining ideas from many areas and time periods to analyze increasingly more sophisticated concepts in literature. Here the student **anchors his/her thoughts in the text with evidence, but thinks beyond the scope of the individual piece.**  
[Some helpful verbs to describe what occurs in synthesis: *develop, construct, design, hypothesize, compose*]
- IV. ANALYSIS:** At this level, the student is able to break down an idea into its principal parts OR show similarities between things (main ideas, themes, characters). This is where topic sentences are constructed. The student can detect the relationships of the parts and the way they are organized. For example, looking for similarities and differences in the text (or between texts) and drawing perceptive conclusions.  
[Some helpful verbs to describe what occurs in analysis: *examine, investigate, analyze, categorize, compare and contrast*]
- III. APPLICATION:** The student has done something with what he/she has learned. The student uses the information in a new situation.  
[Some helpful verbs to describe application: *apply, solve, make use of, practice*]
- II. UNDERSTANDING:** The student changes the form of the previously learned information by translating it into his/her own words. The student grasps the meaning and intent of material, reflects understanding, makes estimates and predictions, grasps the implication of a concept, and manipulates the ordering of ideas. This involves pointing

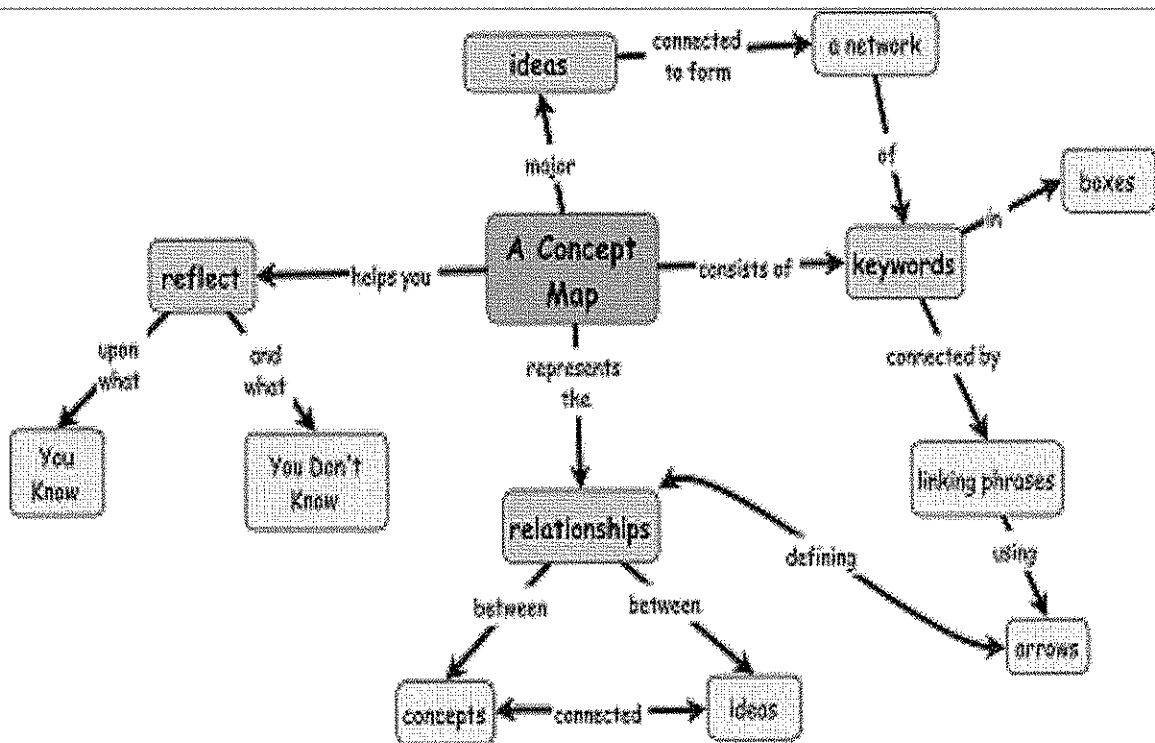
to the text for proof (absolutely necessary, but not enough in itself). This level is basic to understanding and must be mastered. Students must grasp meaning before they can analyze.

[Some useful verbs to demonstrate understanding: *compare, relate, categorize, classify, reword, outline, summarize, select examples*]

- I. KNOWLEDGE:** The student recalls or recognizes information previously presented. Writers employ this level when they give direct quotations and references to the text in the body of the essay or presentation.

[Some useful verbs that demonstrate knowledge: *list, recite, group, name, locate, copy, label, and define*]

SOURCE: <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Atrium/5852/Ap/levelsofanalysis.html>



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